



# FEEDBACK FROM THE FIELD

## USE OF DIGITAL DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

### LINK NCA IN HAITI

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#### **KoBo ToolBox: an open source tool designed for humanitarian research**

For the quantitative phase of the Link NCA study carried out in Haiti early 2017, the research team used the KoBo ToolBox platform to collect data. KoBo ToolBox is a comprehensive set of tools, offering user-friendly interface from questionnaire design to data collection through mobile devices and its subsequent analysis. Open source and free of charge, Kobo ToolBox was developed by “Harvard Humanitarian Initiative”, an organization hosted in Harvard University. The program is specifically designed for humanitarian organizations. A specific web server is hosted by UN-OCHA. To know more: <http://www.kobotoolbox.org/>

#### **How the questionnaires had been designed?**

Lenka Blanárová, the Link NCA analyst, designed a set of four questionnaires. The Information System Department from Action Against Hunger Paris headquarters provided support with the adaptation of LinkNCA questionnaires to an electronic format and inserting logic codes. For instance, those logic codes would allow for certain questions to be skipped depending on previous answers of interviewees.

#### **How it changed the process of interviews?**

It was particularly useful during interactions with members of selected households, during which surveyors could quickly proceed through questions displayed on screens of their mobile devices and pick correct answers with a simple touch of fingerprints. A questionnaire, which would had taken up to 30 to 40 minutes could thus be reduced to 15 minutes.



## How it improved data quality?

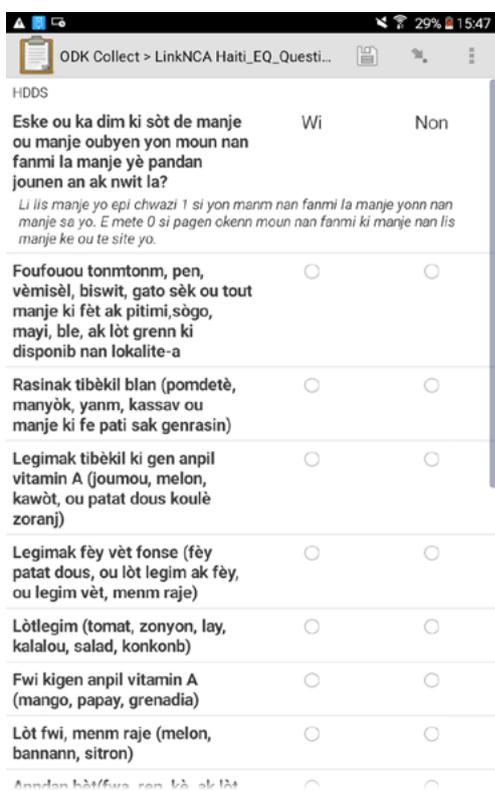
In addition, it allowed surveyors, and especially their supervisors, to go back to each questionnaire and review collected data, with a special focus dedicated to the elimination of logical errors. This review was done before the upload of completed questionnaires into an online database while another complex screening for errors was done once the data was synthesized.

## How it fostered the analysis?

Once data collection was complete, the Link NCA analyst downloaded an entire database in an Excel spreadsheet and cleaned the entire data set, which was consequently analysed on Epi-Info software.

By collecting the data using mobile devices, it saves time on data transfer into an electronic form and also zeros any errors that occur during a manual transcript.

However, certain incompatibility issues emerged between the two tools, KoBo ToolBox and Epi-Info. Although, drawing on lessons learnt from this pilot test, a further adaptation of the questionnaires would help to avoid pitfalls of data analysis through Epi Info.



Screen shot of the on KoBoToolBox questionnaire designed for the Link NCA in Haiti - in creole



Surveyors working with tablets on the field, during the Link NCA



## **Three key factors of success: training of surveyors, full pre-test and proactivity of the research manager,**

Considering that it is not possible to anticipate all possible scenarios that can occur during interviews, the high quality training of surveyors is key to success. A thorough question by question training must be provided to surveyors in which they get the first, detailed feel for the content.

Besides, it is always advisable to test the whole questionnaire before the first interview from its beginning until its end. Indeed, a pre-test is a must for a Link NCA survey. For instance, the pre-test organized by Lenka was followed by a two or three hours debriefing where people raised a number of good points on questions and answers, and how these were recorded on tablets. It enabled to spot «logical errors », i.e. questions that were omitted even though they should have been displayed or questions that were displayed even though they should be automatically skipped.

The researcher or project manager has to lead entirely the KoBo ToolBox project. Therefore, his/her interest and proactivity is key for the success of the implementation of KoBo ToolBox.

## **Issue of synchronization of data when the Internet coverage is low**

In Haiti, the research team had troubles synchronizing data on a server due to a weak Internet coverage. Internet is available more or less everywhere in Haiti, but not in mountainous areas where the strength was not enough for data transfer.

The research team had to buy a wifi hotspot and then travel to central locations to get a good coverage to transfer the data. Long travelling time to those areas to transfer the data hampered the study process.

To conclude, it is crucial to test the data synchronization before the launch of the actual data collection.

## **Replication of the experience for other Link NCA projects and collaboration between NGOs**

KoBo ToolBox enables to use a form multiple times after translation. Therefore, replication of this experience for other Link NCA going further lessons learnt seems should be done.

Action Against Hunger Information System Department is also working in collaboration with other NGOs (for instance MSF) to improve the tool and systematize it.

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